

**QUESTIONS FOR APPOINTEES TO THE CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF CONTROL**

1. What goals would you like to achieve during your time on the board?
2. Over the last 15 or 20 years it seems that all state universities have been expanding programs to try to offer everything to everyone. Do you think this is a good idea?
3. Please describe the conditions that would need to exist before you would vote to increase tuition?
4. Governor Granholm recently proposed giving additional funds from the federal stimulus package to universities and community colleges that hold the line on tuition. Do you support this proposal?
5. If Central Michigan University (CMU) is facing a budget deficit, what areas would you look to first to make cuts? Please list several areas where the University has already made cuts or become more efficient.
6. Capital outlay projects for universities require a 25% match before getting funds from the state for building projects. In these tough economic times, do you think a university should be spending money on building projects rather than using that money to hold down tuition rates?
7. Do you think this is the right time for CMU to be pursuing a medical school?
8. What type of outcomes should the University measure to determine if it is being successful?
9. What is your position on the importance of state universities as authorizers of charter public schools?
10. Recently at CMU, Gary Peters was hired as a faculty member and his salary was paid for out of a private endowment. It was well known at the time that Mr. Peters was running for Congress when he was hired. Do you think this was a wise decision by the University? Why or why not? Do you feel a different selection process for this position should be used in the future?
11. In which areas of technological research does your university specialize? How effective is your school at commercializing this research to help grow the state's economy?
12. Do you think K-12 institutions are doing a good job of preparing students for college? Why?

**RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FOR APPOINTEES TO THE  
CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY BOARD OF CONTROL**

**Sarah Opperman**

**February 2009**

**1. What goals would you like to achieve during your time on the board?**

As a new trustee and without appropriate background, I do not have specific goals for the University. On a personal level, I hope to help assure that the quality of the program – and its graduates – continues to improve. CMU already provides a strong education and serves as a career catalyst for both new and returning students, and we should assure it continues to best serve the needs of the State and the students.

**2. Over the last 15 to 20 years it seems that all state universities have been expanding programs to try to offer everything to everyone. Do you think this is a good idea?**

Universities should meet the evolving needs of their stakeholders, which include offering desired programs that are financially sustainable for the State, as well as students. It begins with assuring that there is a thorough feasibility analysis, and includes thoughtful consideration of programs based on the ability of the University of provide a strong, competitive program.

**3. Please describe the conditions that would need to exist before you would vote to increase tuition?**

This is a sensitive and critical time to manage increasing costs and expectations of universities with the harsh economic realities facing families and this State. Increasing tuition should be a last resort, and would need to be carefully considered only after other steps/options had been fully explored, including reducing current expenses, delaying optional programs, etc. We need to balance cost controls with assuring that students receive the high quality education they expect and deserve.

**4. Governor Granholm recently proposed giving additional funds from the federal stimulus package to universities and community colleges that hold the line on tuition. Do you support this proposal?**

The Governor has been clear that education is not only an important foundation, but will be one of the critical elements in helping our State and its citizens transform to meet the changing needs and opportunities for the future. If the stimulus package includes funding opportunities, it should be equitably distributed to assure strong educational opportunities for our citizens.

**5. If Central Michigan University (CMU) is facing a budget deficit, what areas would you look to first to make cuts? Please list several areas where the University has already made cuts or become more efficient.**

I have not yet had an opportunity to review the current financial conditions and cuts of the University, so my perspective is more philosophical than specific until better informed about the actual situation. In general, University funds should focus first on assuring and preserving the educational foundation and on core safety standards, and secondarily on the broader "experience". Core curricula should be preserved at the expense of ad-hoc or little-used programs, facilities and events.

- 6. Capital outlay project for universities require a 25% match before getting funds from the state for building projects. In these tough economic times, do you think a university should be spending money on building projects rather than using that money to hold down tuition rates?**

We need to actively manage the current financial constraints, while also focusing on the long-term success of students and this State. Capital projects require long lead-times to build understanding and donor support, and later to build the desired facility. To cancel or postpone long-term plans also risks cancelling or postponing faith and confidence in the very educational institutions and programs we seek to protect. We should 1) assure full feasibility analysis of the project, and 2) assure long-term projects are sequenced to have heavier funding needs at the right time in the financial cycle.

- 7. Do you think this is the right time for CMU to be pursuing a medical school?**

From the data I have seen, Michigan has a growing need for additional physicians, particularly in the mid and northern areas of Michigan. As a life-long resident of mid-Michigan, I believe such a medical school will assure more physicians who ultimately stay in the area, as well as offer additional social and economic opportunities that accompany such an investment in the region. We should carefully consider specific requests, but we should not discourage efforts to build a healthy and vibrant State.

- 8. What type of outcomes should the University measure to determine if it is being successful?**

CMU should be judged on the availability and quality of educational programs that meet the needs and aspirations of its students and the State. At a time when our needs are acute, the responsibility to reliably deliver quality educations and help our citizens to succeed is even more profound.

- 9. What is your position on the importance of state universities as authorizers of charter public schools?**

The State owes it to parents and students alike to assure a strong educational foundation for our children, regardless of the particular program. I believe our state universities, and CMU in particular, have proven their ability to serve in this capacity.

- 10. Recently at CMU, Gary Peters was hired as a faculty member and his salary was paid for out of a private endowment. It was well known at the time that Mr. Peters was running for Congress when he was hired. Do you think this was a wise decision by the University? Why or why not? Do you feel a different selection process for this position should be used in the future?**

While I do not have background on the details of this particular situation, I do believe the selection process should include appropriate consultations so that concerns and implications for the broader University are considered in the decision-making process.

- 11. In which areas of technological research does your university specialize? How effective is your school at commercializing this research to help grow the state's economy?**

CMU is focused and receiving national grants in several important research areas, including alternative energy, nanotechnology, water remediation and advanced material sciences. I'm also impressed with the University's support of new businesses through its Smart Zone and CMU-Research Corporation. This provides a strong link between research and new businesses that benefits the State.

**12. Do you think K-12 institutions are doing a good job of preparing students for college? Why?**

My own children have had an excellent K-12 education. However, K-12 institutions are inconsistent in their effectiveness across the State. Many of the issues were highlighted in the Cherry Commission report, and a coordinated approach with academia, government, parents, and business/communities will be required to address the systemic issues.